

Survey of the Bible part 51 2 Chronicles 32:9-15

Last week we saw king Hezekiah being confronted by the king of Assyria while in the midst of being blessed by God because Hezekiah's desire to honor God by reestablishing the worship of God while tearing down the places of idol worship.

And as if often the case with the enemy he likes to steal any joy we might find in the Lord. And during those times it's good to be reminded in whom we trust and delight, especially during times of trial and that's exactly what Hezekiah did.

2 Chronicles 32:7-8 ⁷ "Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. ⁸ "With him is *only* an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles." And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

But what is fascinating in the following verses is how we see some of the tactics of the enemy coming against God's people.

2 Chronicles 32:9-15 ⁹ After this Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem while he *was* besieging Lachish with all his forces with him, against Hezekiah king of Judah and against all Judah who *were* at Jerusalem, saying, ¹⁰ "Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, 'On what are you trusting that you are remaining in Jerusalem under siege? ¹¹ 'Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give yourselves over to die by hunger and by thirst, saying, "The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria"? ¹² 'Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, "You shall worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn incense"? ¹³ 'Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods of the nations of the lands able at all to deliver their land from my hand? ¹⁴ 'Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations which my fathers utterly destroyed who could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? ¹⁵ 'Now therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you like this, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand?'"

There are a couple of things worth noting here. First, from merely a military tactical standpoint this is very clever. The object of war

is not to always kill as many people as possible on the side of your enemy.

The object of war is to obtain the prize, be it land, natural riches, dominion over the people you're attacking or whatever.

When Hitler invaded the Sudetenland, which was part of Czechoslovakia, in the late 1930's, he didn't have to fire a shot. He took a calculated risk and used the excuse that the German speaking people who lived in parts of Czechoslovakia were being persecuted and so he told the world that he was going to liberate only those parts of Czechoslovakia that contained the German speaking people.

The world, including Czechoslovakia, didn't have any appetite for war since this was only about 20 years since W.W.I. And so, just the threat of war was enough for no one to oppose Hitler.

In today's military world this is known as Psy-ops, or psychological warfare, where you take advantage of the situation and manipulate situations in your favor so as to accomplish your goal.

And so, if you can convince your enemy that if they go to war with you they will become annihilated, then the chances are very good that your military will not have to suffer and you can obtain the prize without much bloodshed which is exactly how Hitler then went on a few years later in taking France.

And so, the king of Assyria is simply trying to avoid a conflict while at the same time convincing the Israelites that it's just not worth them losing their lives to keep Assyria from taking their land which they're going to do anyhow. So, just accept the inevitable and let us take over your territory and you can live.

But from a spiritual standpoint we have the same thing going on. This is a classic picture of how Satan works in the lives of God's people. Notice some of the tricks employed in our text.

2 Chronicles 32:10-11 ¹⁰ "Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, 'On what are you trusting that you are remaining in Jerusalem under siege? ¹¹ 'Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give yourselves over to die by hunger and by thirst, saying, "The LORD our God will deliver us from the ¹hand of the king of Assyria "'?

From a military standpoint if you can undermine your enemy's trust in their ability to succeed in the fight then you've already won. Using the example of war this is precisely what happened when the Germans also invaded Russia. The first year of the campaign went well, but when winter settled in and the supply lines were cut off the Germans were forced to surrender after a time.

There were still hundreds of thousands of German soldiers who could fight, but when their trust in their leadership, their trust in their ability to be supplied with food, bullets and so forth vanished you could do one of two things. You can fight to the death or try and live even if it's under the thumb of your enemy.

Even at the protests of Hitler himself who ordered that they fight to the death, his generals chose to surrender, sparing the lives of their soldiers.

So, how does this work spiritually for the believer in Christ Jesus? How does the enemy use this tactic of trying to force us to surrender our trust in God?

By taking away hope. The hope of our lives getting better. The hope of seeing any light at the end of the tunnel. By taking away the hope that the truth is true.

When your hope is gone so is your ability to fight. If anyone had a reason to lose hope it was the apostle Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:9-31 ⁹ and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows *I do!* ¹² But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. ¹⁶ Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if *you do*, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little. ¹⁷ What I am saying, I am not saying as the

Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.
¹⁸ Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. ¹⁹ For you, being *so* wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. ²⁰ For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. ²¹ To *my* shame I *must* say that we have been weak *by comparison*. But in whatever respect anyone *else* is bold-- I speak in foolishness-- I am just as bold myself. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ?-- I speak as if insane-- I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶ *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; ²⁷ *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? ³⁰ If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

There aren't many people who had to endure what Paul endured as he served Jesus Christ. And yet to the very end of his life we read this.

2 Timothy 4:7 ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

But the question is why did Paul fight the good fight and finish the course and keep the faith in the face of all of the problems he faced in this life?

2 Timothy 4:8 ⁸ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

He never lost his hope. The enemy was always trying to destroy him and yet he fought on to the very end. Why? Because he had already won the war.

Remember what Hezekiah told the people of God?

2 Chronicles 32:7 ⁷ "Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him.

Romans 8:31-39 ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Only when we see this life from the perspective that the battles we fight are battles that God shares in will we be willing to go forward in the name of Christ and represent him faithfully in His power.

Remember, we're marching home. Every step we take, every move we make, God says, I'll be watching you. Okay, so I borrowed that line.

But the point is that same truth was borrowed from God's word when David said, **Psalms 23:4** ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

But the enemy doesn't stop simply because you desire to follow Christ and trust Him for all things. He will always try to undermine your faith.

2 Chronicles 32:11 ¹¹ 'Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give yourselves over to die by hunger and by thirst, saying, "The LORD our God will deliver us from the ¹hand of the king of Assyria "?"

Again, the enemy will use whatever tactic to tear away at our hope.

In this case what does the enemy appeal to?

The flesh. Hunger, thirst, the threat of not being delivered. And notice how in these threats the enemy places Hezekiah as the threat not the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria is actually saying that he's there to keep them from dying by thirst and hunger. Hezekiah is the bad guy for keeping them from getting food and water.

How twisted is that? But that's how the enemy works. And it's not a new tactic. And when the people of God submit to the wiles of the enemy in this way they undermine their ability to be delivered.

Exodus 14:10-12 ¹⁰ As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² "Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians '?' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

Notice what the Israelites do here. Who do they cry out to first?

They cry out to God.

But then who do they turn to and blame for their problems?

Moses. The enemy will put the one who is being led by God in the spot light and blame him who faithfully represents God as the problem.

Exodus 14:11 ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt?"

Wait a minute. Who took them out of Egypt into the wilderness?

Exodus 6:7-8 ⁷ "Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that ***I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*** ⁸ "I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you *for* a possession; I am the LORD."

So, when they blame Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, who was only taking his orders from God, who stated quite clearly why He was bringing them out of Egypt, to bring them into the promised land, who are they actually blaming?

And by the way, if they knew that God promised to bring them into the Promised land, by taking them out of Egypt, why were they grumbling?

Because no sooner did they leave Egypt they had already mistrusted God when the first trial came their way.

And so, like the king of Assyria, our enemy will always try and undermine our trust that God really has our best in mind to His glory. And often times he'll use the tactic of appealing to our flesh.

But he'll also use the tactic of placing doubt in our mind by questioning the ability of our God to deliver us.

2 Chronicles 32:12-15 ¹² "Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, "You shall worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn incense"? ¹³ "Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods of the nations of the lands able at all to deliver their land from my hand? ¹⁴ "Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations which my fathers utterly destroyed who could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? ¹⁵ "Now therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you like this, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand?"

What is the king of Assyria saying here about his power and the power of the other gods, including the One true God?

They are powerless to keep him from destroying them.

And so, he is planting the seed of doubt that the God of Israel is true to His word to be faithful to His promises. And again, this is not a new tactic of the enemy. In fact, it's actually the oldest tactic of the enemy as it pertains to the human race.

Genesis 3:1-5 ^{NAU} Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden '?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! ⁵ "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan essentially is saying to the woman that God wants to keep you from the truth and can't be trusted with the truth. And this is the exact same tactic the enemy uses even today as false prophets and teachers assume the role of truth tellers at the expense of the truth that God has revealed.

2 Peter 2:1-3 ^{NAU} But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. ² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³ and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

We have an obligation to our God and Savior to trust Him no matter what. The wiles of the enemy are abundant and they will never cease this side of heaven. But they're not new and they're not unknown.

If we know the truth we can recognize the tactics and simply move forward in the confidence that God is with us every step of the way and like the promise made to the Israelites that He is leading us into the promised land we can keep our eyes on the prize and know that the shed blood of Christ and His resurrection from the dead insures us of the hope of ultimately being delivered into His hands.

Hebrews 11:8-10 ⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.